DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 325 CE 080 970

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TITLE	Short & Sweet: Community Action for Widening Participation.
INSTITUTION	National Inst. of Adult Continuing Education, Leicester (England).
SPONS AGENCY	Department for Education and Employment, London (England).
ISBN	ISBN-1-86201-079-X
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	26p.; Final report of the Adult & Community Development Project (Project 99).
AVAILABLE FROM	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 21 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE, United Kingdom, Web site: http://www.niace.org.uk (5 British pounds).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; Adult Learning; *Adult Programs; Adult Students; Blacks; *Community Action; *Community Education; Community Organizations; Disadvantaged Youth; Economically Disadvantaged; Educational Improvement; Educational Needs; Educational Trends; Foreign Countries; Futures (of Society); Homeless People; Learning Disabilities; Needs Assessment; Older Adults; *Outreach Programs; Participation; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Rural Areas; Rural Education; *School Community Relationship; School Districts; Special Needs Students; Student Recruitment; Sustainable Development; Voluntary Agencies; Volunteers
IDENTIFIERS	*England

ABSTRACT

The Adult and Community Development Project (Project 99) was established to distribute one-time development grants to all local education authorities (LEAs) in England and some voluntary and community organizations for implementation of short-term activities in the adult and community education field. Organizations receiving grants were requested to target their efforts to widen participation in education for members of one of the following groups: blacks, men, families, older adults, disadvantaged individuals, rural residents, adults with learning difficulties, disaffected young adults, and homeless people. Project 99 provided funding for projects in the following areas: country learning; disadvantaged estates; adults with learning difficulties; older and bolder; disaffected young adults; excluded men; black communities; family learning; and sustainable development. Issues raised during Project 99 included the following: creation of opportunities and meeting of needs; additional and future funding; partnership; outreach; venue; the importance of tasters as a way to try something new; progression; accreditation; personal benefits; and areas where funding is most and least successful. An evaluation of the activities conducted with funding from Project 99 confirmed that management of the project was generally successful and efficient. Lists of areas of activity for LEAs and areas of activity for voluntary and community organizations are appended. (MN)

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Short & Sweet

Community Action for Widening Participation

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Fiona Aldridge

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THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR ADULT LEARNING

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Short & Sweet

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THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR ADULT LEARNING

Published by the National Institute of
Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales)

21 De Montfort Street
Leicester LE1 7GE
Company registration no. 2603322
Charity registration no. 1002775

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NIACE, the national organisation for adult learning, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties and disabilities, or insufficient financial resources.

NIACEs website on the Internet is http://www.niace.org.uk

Cataloguing in Publication Data
A CIP record of this title is available from the British Library

ISBN 1 86201 079 X

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Introduction

The Adult and Community Development Project (Project 99) is a £2m DfEE-funded programme to distribute one-off development grants to all local authorities and some voluntary and community organisations to put in place short-term activity in the adult and community education field.

Local Education Authorities

LEAs were notified in mid-January 1999 that they were to receive a grant of £10,000 (£5,000 for Corporation of London and Isles of Scilly) for activity targeted at one or more of the following groups: men, family learning, black communities, older people, disadvantaged estates, country learning, adults with learning difficulties, disaffected young adults, homelessness and revenue schemes (See Appendix A).

Projects were asked to submit proposals to NIACE for approval. 145 English LEAs submitted a proposal and were funded. The total funding allocated to LEAs was £1,425,135.

All work was to be "either building on, but clearly additional to, existing area(s) of work or is clearly extending the range of the authority's widening participation activities", and was to be completed by 31 March 1999.

Categories	Number of LEA bids
Men	48
Family learning	67
Black communities	36
Older people	57
Disadvantaged estates	72
Country learning	26
Adults with learning difficulties	50
Disaffected young adults	28
Homelessness	13
Revenue	60

Number exceeds 145 as some LEAs submitted several projects and some projects covered several categories.

"This unexpected windfall lifted our spirits considerably. We always have a wish list and rarely achieve more than one or two small things. This year we have flown. We have stimulated demand, tidied up, developed our part-time tutor force, engaged stakeholders and had success. Thank you." ***(North Somerset)***

"Too often the bidding process raises aspiration in communities which are impossible to fulfil when bids are unsuccessful. Although the timescale was short, the project...was extremely successful proving that intense concentration of development time and resources successfully raises the profile of adult education, creates a demand and widens participation." ***(Barnsley)***

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Voluntary and Community Organisations

Following this initial allocation of funding, the DfEE wrote to voluntary and community organisations and LEAs offering on a one-off basis a further two strands of funding to strengthen adult learning in the community sector:

- CD-ROMs (with supporting training) for developing basic skills for community organisations working in housing, homelessness and health, organised by the Basic Skills Agency
- Short-term initiatives to engage under-represented groups through intensive outreach and taster activities, organised by NIACE. These should be targeted in one or more of the following areas: country learning, disadvantaged estates, adults with learning difficulties, older & bolder, disaffected young adults, excluded men, black communities, family learning, sustainable development (See Appendix B).

Some 500 voluntary and community organisation were invited to apply on a competitive bidding basis. 247 bids to the value of £3,045,923 were received by NIACE, 65 of which were funded. The total funding allocated under this strand was £704,833.

All work was to "build on, but be clearly additional to, existing work which you are conducting, or clearly extend your existing work to widen participation in learning" and was to be well under way by the end of March and the majority completed by 30 April 1999.

Categories	Number of bids from voluntary and community organisations
Country Learning	4
Disadvantaged Estates	20
Adults with Learning Difficulties	15
Older & Bolder	20
Disaffected Young Adults	11
Excluded Men	11
Black Communities	14
Family Learning	18
Sustainable Development	4

Number exceeds 65 as some organisations submitted several projects and some projects covered several categories.

> *"The group usually gets by with penny pinching, especially as local authority funding for everyday running costs has recently been withdrawn. It's so nice to be able to afford things like professionals to run workshops rather than doing it ourselves on next to nothing. We're absolutely thrilled to have a windfall rather than be doing it on a shoe string."* ***(Evesham and District Self Advocacy Group)***

Target Groups

Organisations were requested to target their widening participation activities at one or more of the target groups shown in Appendices A and B. Even where projects were working with the same target group, a great wealth of diversity was displayed in the work that was undertaken, shown by the illustrations below.

Black communities

One of the key lessons that emerged from projects targeting minority ethnic and language communities was the need for sensitivity to cultural difference. This could include: using tutors who understand the culture and speak the mother tongue of the students; using members of the community as role models and in leadership positions; making paperwork and publicity available in the mother tongue of linguistic minority students; using appropriate venues; using relevant curriculum and styles of teaching; the use of posters and pictures, food, fashion, music, behaviour and speech that are culturally acceptable.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

> *The **Angelou Centre** is a training centre for the educational and vocational needs of black women. Project 99 funded 'Speaking Tongues', a creative reading and writing course, which aimed to introduce black women learners to culturally diverse women writers, particularly those from Africa and South East Asia. The course aimed to increase the confidence of the women to express themselves individually and collectively, break down the fears they have about writing, and encourage reading of black women's literature. Many of the women targeted have no up-to-date qualifications, are long-term unemployed, need ESOL support and have childcare responsibilities. The project took positive action to overcome some of the internal and external barriers through confidence-building and assertiveness training, a flexible timetable, childcare and travel support, job search assistance, and the use of female black staff to build relationships with the women and to provide positive role models. All of the students have decided to return to the Centre in the autumn to design and produce a booklet of all their creative writing work.*

> ***Kingston LEA** used Project 99 funding to make an immediate response to the urgent need presented by a number of newly arrived Kosovans, enabling the LEA to offer intensive English language tuition, IT training and educational advice and guidance. The majority of the students who arrived were at basic and elementary levels, with little or no previous experience of learning English, which meant that they were unable to prepare for accredited courses. However, the intensive course has enabled many students to progress to other courses leading to ESOL and/or IT qualifications. "The funding has enabled a group of adults to achieve their first building block into their 'new' society. Intensive provision of this nature gives students a solid basis on which to begin their studies and to make decisions regarding educational provision."*

Men

Many of the projects targeted at excluded men recognised that learning is sometimes perceived by men to be unattractive, irrelevant and often 'unmasculine'. A great deal of creativity was used by organisations to incorporate their target groups current interests and to

create a learning opportunity out of them. Using sport as a gateway to learning was especially effective in a number of projects.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

> *The **Big Issue in the North Trust** used Project 99 funding to exhibit artwork produced by vendors of the magazine. Four vendors were selected to be curators of the exhibition and received training from a professional artist and the staff of Bolton Museum and Art Gallery in all-aspects of curating and staging an exhibition. Up to 120 vendors were expected to visit the exhibition, having the chance to meet and talk with the curators about the project and as a result have their own expectations and aspirations raised. The vendors involved "took immense pride in their work, showing great initiative, demonstrated good problem solving skills and carried a level of responsibility for the overall product". The exhibition proved a great success and is currently being launched in other cities in the north of England. Overall the project reflected a real interest from vendors in arts and other creative opportunities as a means of returning to learning.*
>
> *Liverpool is a city that is 'mad about football'. **Liverpool LEA** took this fact as a starting point to forge links and create contacts with non-participant men. A team of male football fanatics with a strong interest in community-based adult education were engaged as outreach workers. Initially interest was mainly expressed in the field of football and sports but it soon became apparent through guidance interviews held in the local pub that a wider range of aspirations – Information Technology, languages and others – existed. The project ended after six weeks on a high note when two teams were recruited from the participants and a friendly, inter-generational public game of football was played.*

Family Learning

Whilst Project 99 mainly sought to focus on the provision of adult education, it is important to recognise that involvement in a child's education can often be the starting point for adults returning to learning themselves. Projects ranged from parents/carers simply assisting in their child's learning, to parents/carers and children learning simultaneously. In many cases, having taken these first steps, parents/carers have now enrolled on adult education classes of personal interest to them. However, some projects were clearly designed solely for the benefit of children, and parental involvement included to secure funding.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

> *The **National Tenants Resource Centre** provides high quality residential and day training programmes for all those living and working in low income areas. Project 99 funded two intensive residential weekend courses aimed at: supporting children's learning; enhancing the wider families' learning experiences and their abilities to help their children learn; and for the whole family to have a 'family learning holiday'. Single parents, their children and their wider families were targeted through Community Action projects and Family Centres and both weekends were oversubscribed. The 'learning holidays' were extremely successful, allowing intense, quality time for learning, relaxation, informal socialising without the anxieties of everyday life. "It is such a logical approach to family learning that adults should learn with and through their children and should learn together. However, there are*

too few opportunities for this to happen routinely in daily life. This type of residential event allows parents and children to have an extended learning experience without significant cost, thus reducing some of the barriers to family learning."

***Barking and Dagenham LEA** spent some of their Project 99 funding on running a Books for Babies course for parents/carers at three health clinics in the Borough aiming to encourage parents to share books with babies; widen the participation of parents in post-16 education by providing an informal community-based, first step to formal education; and raise literacy levels by developing skills at the earliest possible age. The course was extremely successful in attracting non-participant adults, which was helped by informal one-to-one promotional visits by the tutor to baby-weighing sessions at the clinic, and the courses being held at the clinics which were already familiar territory and hence accessible for participants. Three out of every four participants have registered with the Adult College to receive information on forthcoming family and parentcraft courses, and funding is being sought to extend the Books for Babies course to other parents/carers.*

Older & Bolder

In an ageing society it is extremely important that we value our older members and recognise the vital contribution that they can make to our society. Much of the work funded by Project 99 focussed on bringing out the wealth of experience of older adults for the benefit of those around them. Providers commented that the freedom to target older learners particularly and discuss their needs and barriers was welcomed, as was the opportunity to spend money on supporting older people in a more flexible manner than is usually possible. The ability to put on short taster sessions at times and venues suitable for older people, together with free transport, was helpful. A valuable lesson for many providers was realising that older people do want to participate in learning, but barriers are often too difficult to overcome. Another comment made related to their witnessing the pleasure that older people derived from learning something, which was a very rewarding experience. All of them said that without the Project 99 money, the event could not have taken place.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

***Hackney Agency for Volunteering (HAVE)** is the central co-ordinating body in the London Borough of Hackney for promoting, supporting and developing volunteering. Their statistics reveal that older adults are under-represented in formal volunteering. In order to find out why this was so, they bid for Project 99 funding to undertake research. Involving local older adults, HAVE conducted a needs analysis into the types of training that older people would like to enable them more successfully to become involved in volunteering, and consulted on how the design and promotion of volunteering opportunities could be improved to increase the numbers of older people involved in community service. A launch event was held to disseminate the findings to organisations involved with the Volunteer Bureau and to make an award for the Older & Bolder Volunteer of the Year Award.*

***Buckinghamshire LEA** conducted a marketing campaign to attract older people to a forum in order to involve them in the design and promotion of learning opportunities. As a result, taster courses were delivered in residential home and community settings in activities such as gentle exercise, art, music, reminiscence, creative flower arranging and Tai Chi. In residential homes participation was greatly affected by the*

enthusiasm from staff and the health of residents. Discussions have now arisen over extending provision. "It is important that the project does not lose momentum and that longer term provision is established where there is a clear need."

Disadvantaged Estates

Much exciting work took place on deprived estates up and down the country, although this is a target group which required a greater investment of time than anticipated. Established outreach workers were able to build up trusting relationships with individuals and links with grassroot community networks. Provision took place in a variety of locations – churches, pubs, schools – anywhere that local residents felt relaxed and safe. The curriculum was often extremely innovative and/or practical, to appeal to financially disadvantaged people who often see education as a luxury that can be ill-afforded.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

*The **Carrwood Centre** in Bradford used their Project 99 funding to provide several short initiatives for residents on local estates, mainly families of white origin from severely socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Courses were all relevant to the needs of local people and included: 'Get Crafty' providing the opportunity to learn and develop skills in decorating, painting, curtain-making and restoring dilapidated furniture; Community Sports Leadership Training; Working with Children Course; and Positive Parenting Programme. "The courses have given many people a new focus, a new direction in their lives, as well as enabling them to positively contribute to their community in the ways that these short-term projects have enabled them to do... In particular the local school has benefited from the students running two sports clubs for the children during their lunch breaks and twice a week after school."*

***Lancashire County Council** used their Project 99 funding to support The Clayton Brook Community Learning Project which has recently acquired a Community House on the estate. Two workshops were facilitated on special paint effects and soft furnishings, the objective being to teach local volunteers new skills which would enable them participate in the refurbishment of the Community House, as well as learning new ideas for their own homes. "One young lady with no previous experience of sewing attended the soft furnishings workshop. Although at first somewhat hesitant and shy, she soon gained confidence as she learnt new skills. By the end of the workshop she had learnt how to measure, cut out, use a sewing machine, and assemble curtains. She took a pair of curtains home to finish, proudly returning to present them to the house a few days later."*

Country Learning

One of the greatest barriers to participation in rural areas is the problem of isolation often magnified as a result of poor public transport. Traditional funding methods often require minimum numbers in adult education classes in order for them to run, thus limiting the local provision that can be provided in small villages. Project 99 funding was able to make a significant impact in several localities by providing tasters, short courses, and learning festivals in such areas. Organisations also welcomed the opportunity to buy moveable equipment so that the quality of learning in country community centres could be brought nearer the standard of College venues.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

> ***Northamptonshire ACRE*** *used Project 99 funding to develop a series of computer familiarisation workshops with creative writing based in two village locations. The workshops were free of charge with carers, special needs and childcare costs included. Free transport was provided for those who required it as many of the target group live in small isolated village communities.*
>
> *As part of its development of IT provision in rural communities,* ***Dorset LEA*** *makes use of the TEC/Dorset Community Action Mobile Training Centre. Project 99 funding has been used to purchase resources and materials to establish learning centres in 3 rural localities so as to provide sustainable learning opportunities after the Mobile Training Centre has moved on.*

Adults with Learning Difficulties and/or other Disabilities

Various projects offered adults with learning difficulties, with a wide range of differing needs, some opportunities to take part in learning. They included oral history classes for older adults with learning difficulties, support for students working in a community café, a horticulture project and building works to make adaptations to improve access and classroom facilities for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. More than one tutor commented on how their expectations had been challenged by students who had unexpectedly developed skills and interests which were a surprise to everyone. However, of particular note was the absence of work with adults with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Short-term work such as this tends to highlight how much they are missing out the rest of the time.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

> ***Somerset Dance Connection*** *received funding to undertake intensive outreach and taster sessions through dance residencies working with adults with learning difficulties, creating dance pieces to be performed for colleagues, friends and families. During a visit, a member of NIACE staff was very impressed with the results as even the students with the most severe learning difficulties were engaged and joining in. "It really brought home to me how valuable dance is as a means of self expression for people with little speech."*
>
> ***Calderdale LEA*** *in partnership with Calderdale Advocacy set up three self-advocacy discussion groups for adults with learning difficulties across Calderdale to comment on adult education provision in order to produce a report summarising students' views and opinions, to contribute to a review of provision. Calderdale Advocacy has considerable expertise in supporting people with learning difficulties to speak up and to voice their views and opinions. As an independent organisation, it is able to support people to say what they really feel (even if it is negative) and to record the discussions in an objective way. An adult education tutor has worked alongside the staff from Calderdale Advocacy in each of the three groups, which has provided a valuable staff development opportunity. The tutor has been very impressed with the support from Calderdale Advocacy and feels that she has learnt a lot from their way of working: "I didn't realise you had to take things so slowly. I'd have rushed through things!"*

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Disaffected Young Adults

This is a target group which is identified as needing a great deal of support and stimulation. Project 99 produced some creative and imaginative work in order to capture the interest and involvement of young adults, demonstrating that organised learning can be as potent a focus for them as the kinds of activity in which they are usually involved. Absences from courses were common due to housing, drug, alcohol, health and other issues, and motivation and punctuality could often be a problem. However, on the whole, the young adults threw themselves into the opportunities offered them. Accreditation to this group proved to be a real confidence booster, especially for those who had 'failed' at school.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

> *In response to a recent consultation, **NCH Action for Children** recognised the need for there to be an opportunity for separate groupwork with young men and young women to explore gender role expectations. Project 99 financed a series of separate interactive workshops and social activities, for young men and women, to discuss and learn safely and appropriately about issues which relate specifically to their gender, for example managing anger and frustration, the impact of domestic violence on children, effects of alcoholism, debt and so on. Thirty young people benefited from the workshops which successfully met the identified need, and as a result have produced a short training video, a diary of feelings, observations and written contributions for personal use by participants and young people, and a toolkit for trainers. "While the change from lacking confidence, through to growing in confidence, to being fully confident may be long and, at times, difficult for many participants, staff are clear that among the current group, many of whom have had appalling experiences, this progress is being achieved. As one member of staff put it, 'They now talk about the future!' As one student put it, 'Life's a privilege – not a right.'"*

> *The New Street Community Centre in **St Helens LEA** is in an area of high youth unemployment and crime. A recent survey showed that 89 per cent of residents had a problem with nuisance and crime on the estate, largely caused by bored youth. As a result, the tenants are developing a youth project which enables young people to accumulate points for voluntary work. This is supported by a training programme for young people and adult mentor. Project 99 funding was used to help the development of the Centre by running training in first aid and in health and hygiene for the young people and their mentors.*

Homelessness (LEAs only)

Much new and innovative work took place with homeless people, although this is a target group with many differing needs and problems associated with lack of permanency, addiction and mental health problems. Much of the work funded took place around existing day and night shelters, and built on existing provision which offered warmth, shelter, food and health advice, to provide both educational and fun activities to encourage homeless people to participate in learning opportunities. One of the greatest challenges facing organisations was putting together structured learning opportunities for those whose lives have no structure.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

> *St Botolph's Project is part of the services offered at the Aldgate Advice Café, which has run in the crypt of St Botolph's Church since the 1950s. The Café runs on a drop-*

in basis, offering a variety of informal courses, advice and guidance, as well as being a safe, warm haven during the evenings. Project 99 money was used to buy touch-screen IT equipment and interactive software to enable people with higher support needs to access IT and break down some of the fears surrounding technology. As a result of funding, a Creative Writing Group was set up and clients were using the IT equipment to write articles, letters, poems and draw pictures for the regular Centre newsletter. The provision of IT equipment and the establishment of an informal group have enabled students not only to develop IT skills, but also to improve communication skills and to learn to develop one-to-one support strategies between themselves. ***(Corporation of London)***

Leicester LEA's *Remit Project sets up a variety of educational opportunities in places where individuals who were either homeless, in hostel accommodation or recently re-housed felt comfortable in order to make the learning and positive experience, as a first step to encourage people into educational environments. Within the planned developments there was progression from 'first stage' opportunities into vocationally-based activities, taking place in a variety of established settings in and around Leicester. Opportunities were based very much on the needs of the individual and were aimed at making them more self-reliant and aware of their own needs. For example, it was planned that where people used the catering facilities to buy meals, they would learn how to budget, buy and cook their own meals, and become catering providers for other Centre users. Facilities were also available to offer woodwork, metalwork, pottery, home decorating techniques and gardening to name but a few, and this was seen as vital if homeless and hostel-based people were going to be able to make the transition to living in their own accommodation.*

Revenue (LEAs only)

Local Education Authorities were offered the opportunity to bid for funding of schemes for improving the appearance of facilities so as to attract more learners. Forty per cent of Authorities took up this opportunity, purchasing adult-sized furniture, specialist equipment, learning resources, storage facilities, work stations, signage, lighting, and materials to decorate venues used for adult education. Much photographic evidence was submitted as to the transformation that this funding has made to learning environments.

Some examples of work funded under Project 99:

Dodworth Junior and Infant School in ***Barnsley LEA*** *benefited from Project 99 with the purchase of adult chairs and tables, storage facilities, curtains/blinds to provide a more attractive and appropriate setting conducive to expanding evening provision for adults.*

Medway LEA *used their Project 99 funding to make improvements to reception areas in Adult Education Centres in the Borough. "The projects will benefit the adult public as a whole, by improving access and egress facilities and enhance the general psychology of welcome and ambience at both main adult education centres." Improvements include installing automatic sliding doors to facilitate access for students with mobility difficulties and installation of a larger reception counter to provide space for more confidentiality at enrolment.*

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Sustainable Development (Voluntary and Community Organisations only)

This target group attracted only a few proposals and to date, only one report of any substance has been submitted to NIACE. This is obviously an area that needs much more development.

An example of work funded under Project 99:

> *The **Global Community College** received Project 99 funding for outreach work and for provision of taster sessions for tenants' associations, local Agenda 21, environmental and community groups to help people identify needs, possible ways of addressing them and opportunities for learning how to deal with them.*
>
> *Five taster sessions were run, identifying themes such as: the issues raised by the 'Millennium bug' and need for community preparedness as a social insurance policy; the need to use imaginative methods to make connections between local groups and international issues and decision-making processes; and the use of 'community visioning' as a way of involving stakeholders, building a shared vision and creating a plan of action for sustainable community development.*

Issues Raised

Creation of Opportunities and Meeting of Needs

Project 99 provided funding for a diverse range of organisations and an even more diverse range of projects which display a great richness of Adult Education provision and action research.

For some organisations, Project 99 provided the opportunity to take risks or pursue innovative ideas; for others it was a means of funding work that had been on hold because of lack of funding. For some it was the opportunity to take a step back from what they normally do and research and analyse their target group or area, and for others it was a means of accelerating activity and securing quickly the resources most appropriate to the group they were working with.

The flexibility of Project 99 stimulated creative thinking and innovation and overcame barriers to learning such as cost of courses, travel and childcare, requirement to meet minimum numbers, lack of local provision, inflexible timing of courses and so on.

In some cases, Project 99 proved vital in meeting needs. Some of this was need that had been previously identified without the resources or commitment to meet it. In other cases, need emerged at the same time as the funding, for example the provision of ESOL for Kosovan refugees.

Additional and Future Funding

Project 99 provided funding for one-off development grants over a short period of time. However, it also proved to be a resource that generated other funding for a particular project or future funding for the continuation or extension of the work. Within some partnerships additional funding was contributed either financially or in kind. Some projects are seeking additional funding to continue their work, and others were able to produce a saleable outcome (e.g. CDs, videos, toolkits, calendars, and so on), raising revenue to continue the work.

> *"The GAIN directory has been in need of a total update which has not been possible due to lack of funding. From this update, feedback is positive and there seems to be a wide range of usage. Pathways and the Careers Service have agreed to finance a complete update at least once a year in the future."* ***(Sunderland LEA)***
>
> ***Huddersfield Harrambee*** *used Project 99 money to offer workshops in fashion, DJ training, music performance, CD production, dance, video production and drama. Some of the outcomes of the project have included a female singing group producing its own CD, DJs gaining employment at the local university, and Kirklees Council commissioning a CD on safety issues for use in clubs and pubs. Business development opportunities are looked for and nurtured in all activities, providing alternative sources of funding to fees and grants.*

Partnership

Partnership was a key theme in many of the proposals. Local Education Authorities and other local government departments, voluntary and community organisations, charities, businesses, schools and training organisations formed partnerships to work together. New partnerships were formed and established partnerships extended. Some successful partnerships will be

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maintained to undertake more work in the future. Partnerships proved to be an important source of resources, support and expertise, providing both funding in kind and attracting additional funding.

> *In **Peterborough** a Local Adult Learning Association has been set up as a direct result of the contacts made through the outreach workers on the project. This Association (SCALA) has led to a development grant from the Stanground College Association for work to continue into the summer term and are also making a bid to the ACLF for money to develop a local accessible adult learning facility and further support the work of outreach workers so far in this project.*
>
> *"The additional funding gave us the resources to launch a rigorous Basic Skills campaign...Our reputation as a provider of Basic Skills training has increased and we now have a range of agencies and organisations wishing to collaborate with us, for example schools, businesses and training organisations." **(Newham LEA)***

Outreach

Project 99 funding was made available for organisations to undertake activities to widen participation. It was therefore vital that organisations took steps out into the community to attract new learners rather than wait for learners to come to them. Many projects discovered that using established outreach workers was far more effective than trying to build up new links in such a short timescale

> *"Working with grassroots organisations is an effective way of raising awareness about learning opportunities for people who have not participated for many years and would not respond to conventional advertising. Taking learning out to people attracts them, sustains them and enables progression into the classroom." **(Peterborough LEA)***
>
> ***Bolton NEDA** set up a series of pilot courses for Asian women who work from home, and provides a good model for outreach. Shahla, the project worker, has worked locally in different jobs, such as an outreach social worker, before taking up her present post. Her children go to school locally. As an established part of the community herself, she has been able to link with very isolated Asian women who rarely go even half a mile from their own homes and whose spoken English is often minimal. Shahla will be using trainers held in regard by the local Asian community and has also paid careful attention to choosing times and venues for the Project 99 classes which will be comfortable for the women's culture, such as a temple and a school.*

Venue

When aiming to attract adults back into learning, the venue in which the learning takes place can be crucial. Projects found that a familiar venue as near to the learners' home as possible, with good access, security and facilities, where a learner can feel relaxed and comfortable, will greatly encourage participation. A learner's perception and past experiences of a venue will also affect their decision as whether to participate. Project 99 work was based in a variety of venues including: homes, schools, colleges, health clinics, community centres, libraries, pubs, church halls, residential homes, hostels, museums and art galleries and so on.

***Portsmouth LEA** used their Project 99 money to focus on Older Learners and Adults with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, to consult them on their learning needs and to offer taster courses at the local Adult College. Project workers discovered that the target groups saw the College as being a place of learning for young able-bodied students and felt some reluctance and lack of confidence in participating.*

*After **Liverpool LEA** had made initial contact with the non-participant men they were targeting, they asked them whether they would like to meet a worker from the Liverpool Adult Guidance Service. Recognising that the men were unlikely to come to formal guidance sessions, it was agreed that interviews would take place in the local pub where the men would feel most relaxed and comfortable. Most of the men agreed to take part and three pubs across the city were used. "The social atmosphere in the pub contributed to the success of the work done by the guidance workers who were extremely pleased by the results of their efforts."*

Tasters

Many of the projects highlighted the importance of tasters as a way to try something new, to discover new interests, and to have the opportunity to challenge your own and others expectations of yourself. Taster sessions can be extremely successful in attracting non-participants as they offer manageable bites of learning without the need to make a large commitment either financially or of time, and often form a springboard onto further learning.

*"Some of the students who chose to do the horticulture taster course were not those who the staff would have imagined. There were more surprises as the taster course progressed and several individuals unexpectedly developed a keen interest in the work and have asked to continue." (Yola Jacobsen on **Havering LEA**)*

*Feedback from taster sessions run by **South Tyneside LEA** gave the impression that "those who had made the effort to attend the taster sessions had enjoyed the experience, benefited even from such a short learning experience and were motivate to further study."*

*Project 99 enabled **ACRE, Cirencester** to offer a number of discreet taster activities through its network of Rural Community Councils (RCCs) which were intended to 'test the water' for the wider capacity-building Bridge Between project due to start in April. It was hoped they would highlight commonality of skills shortages, identify problems of delivery, set up communication channels, networks and partnerships and generally build up enthusiasm and confidence for the larger project to come. The projects ranged from taster sessions in arts and crafts, keep fit, foreign languages and IT on housing estates, to producing distance learning packs for village shops, to the launching of a campaign to engage a whole town in healthy living styles. The majority of the projects were extremely successful. They have re-affirmed the need for the Bridge Between project and prepared the ground amongst some of the most proactive RCCs. It has established valuable links between grassroots workers and the ACRE staff at HQ. It has showed up in sharp relief the areas where the net has weaknesses. The Bridge Between trainer now has some extremely focussed experience on which to base his/her launch.*

Progression

Many proposals were concerned with the provision of outreach events, taster courses, workshops and short courses to attract non-participants back into learning, and providing them with a route onto further learning through links with Colleges. Progression was evident in many projects. However, it was also clear that some had not considered issues of progression. For some projects, especially those in rural areas, isolation had weakened progression routes.

> ***Hillingdon LEA** ran an introductory photography course as a pilot for a longer course to be funded by the FEFC. All of the students that attended that pilot have enrolled on the course*
>
> *"Long-term outcomes are hopefully to be resolved for students by becoming informed of college courses. This course has been perceived as a 'springboard' and tutors have endeavoured to help students become aware of the long term possibilities of learning about the large number of self-advocacy skills by enrolling in other adult-learning courses and social and leisure courses." **(East Sussex LEA)***

Accreditation

Work funded by Project 99 reached both people for whom gaining qualifications was important, and others for whom the learning itself was what was significant. It is important to recognise and value the small steps that were taken, especially amongst adults with learning difficulties and disabilities and with elderly residents in care homes for whom a small improvement in quality of life is infinitely more important than a certificate. For some learners, however, achieving their first qualification has inspired them with confidence, enthusiasm and boosted their self-esteem.

> ***East Sussex LEA** used some of the Project 99 funding to run self-advocacy courses. Accreditation was inappropriate, although outcomes were identified and aimed for. At the end of the course, no one left with a certificate but a marked improvement was noticed in the students' ability to take part in discussion work and their increased confidence in expressing positive and negative views.*
>
> *"Whilst I have been attending the classes I have achieved my RSA CLAIT 1... I would like to repeat these opportunities, because I find I learn more because the classes are kept small but frequent. The only time the classes are not frequent is when they are waiting for funding which causes our work to set back, so it would be a great help to have these classes on a continuous basis. I am very grateful for NIACE and would like to say thank you."**(Havering LEA)***

Personal Benefits

From the feedback given by institutions it is easy to see the immense impact that small amounts of money can make when spent imaginatively and thoughtfully. Learners have developed new skills, confidence and self-esteem. Some have found employment or progressed onto further learning opportunities, and all of them seem to have had a great deal of fun in the process.

The illustration given below is just one of the many testimonies that we have received illustrating the ways in which this initiative has impacted their lives.

"Jenny moved onto the estate in February after being re-housed due to personal circumstances. She is 27 and has two children. She received the publicity leaflet for the Community Learning Festival and came to the Launch day. She found this a bit daunting but 'was OK because every time she was a bit lost someone came up and started talking to her.'

After the Open Day she was unsure what she wanted to do but was interested in children's activities, computers and hairdressing. She was a bit nervous about coming to the hairdressing tasters but put her name down for the sessions. She couldn't 'bottle out' as Isa, the tutor, knocked on her door the day before the sessions to make sure she was still coming.

Jenny left school at 15 but didn't really attend after she was 13. She hated school. Then she 'went on drugs' and then the kids came along. She's off them now because of the kids. When asked what made her want to learn now she said that the kids were now coming home from school knowing all sorts of things about computers and she couldn't help them. Both children now come to the homework club and Jenny stays and supports the club. She has also started working with the basic skills worker in the Drop-In Centre on spelling and study issues ready for the Hairdressing course in September."

Success?

The most successful use of funding seemed to occur where organisations had allocated small amounts of funding to a number of different areas and projects, and where money was used to extend existing provision or put into practice strategies that had already been discussed and developed.

The less successful practice seemed to occur where organisations were starting completely from scratch, trying to reach new groups in areas with no previous adult education provision and no history of participation, where the necessary development work would inevitably take longer than the funding allowed. In such cases some organisations had not got much further than initial meetings and publicity campaigns. For example, the project worker at Northamptonshire ACRE had no background in education which meant that she had to think through all the issues that those working in the field can take for granted and was unaware of information about good practice or opportunities.

Future Programmes

If similar funding should become available in the future we would need to consider the following, and the value providers put on small budgets to explore new ways of working:

- An extremely short timescale in which to spend the money means that projects financed should be carefully chosen, selecting those with realistic and achievable aims. It was felt that projects which extended current work or were able to put forward a proposal for work that had been on hold due to lack of finance were the most likely to have a significant impact. However, it was obvious that some organisations, particularly LEAs, quickly thought up a proposal in response to receiving information about the funding.
- LEAs were virtually guaranteed that they would receive funding, and this was commented on favourably by many participants. Recent cuts in Adult Education Service budgets justified this decision. However, there were vast differences in quality and value of provision. Other means of allocating money to LEAs could be considered, such as funding a number of very small scale initiatives and building in advice/planning time for weaker bids.
- Whom we invite to submit a proposal for a competitive bidding round needs to be reconsidered. There is a danger that the same organisations are invited again and again to bid for funding streams, and that therefore there may be certain sectors of adult learning that we are excluding. We need to consider how we can use development officer networks to involve organisations in all areas, and how we can extend our reach beyond these networks. Earlier identification of budgets would help with this.
- Offering a broad range of target groups allowed many organisations the flexibility to finance work in all sorts of areas. Whilst we would not wish to remove the benefits of this flexibility it may be that fewer well thought-through categories would be more beneficial in terms of widening participation in key areas and also in allowing NIACE/DfEE to extract lessons for future funding. For example, this might involve asking for bids for work with adults with profound and multiple learning difficulties rather than simply with adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. Gaps in bids to the ALCF and the Laptop Initiative may highlight some areas to be targeted.
- Comment has been made by those making monitoring visits that only a small number of initiatives facilitated by Project 99 have had visible long-term impact. In part this may be because of the speed of the initiative, in part because the impact on curriculum extension, staff development and student confidence may only be visible in future planning cycles. However, it is important to ensure that organisations think about this issue. In any future programmes, we may want to ask organisations how they would embed their project, or how it fits in and adds value to the current work of their organisation.

Improvement of Process

Overall we believe that NIACE managed Project 99 successfully and efficiently. However as can be expected, there are ways in which the process could be refined to make it more effective.

- **Issue:** Project 99 was funded by DfEE with money that became available at the end of the year. This necessitated a very short timescale in which to bid for funding and to ensure the provision took place. The timescale was made clear to organisations at the outset. However, many of them underestimated the time that it would take to complete the work. To date, not all organisations have submitted final reports.

  Lesson: In future the timescale should be stressed as much as possible and organisations urged not to propose projects that realistically will take longer to deliver. Bid-readers would need to highlight projects they feel have an unrealistic timetable, and to give feedback to organisations. Deadlines need to be stated clearly at the outset of the project.

- **Issue:** The categories for activity for both LEAs and voluntary and community organisations were very broad, which enabled imaginative and innovative projects to be funded. However, there were certain items that could not be included in expenditure, for example IT equipment. This had not been explained clearly in the initial correspondence and resulted in a considerable number of calls and significant time being spent in organisations rewriting proposals.

  Lesson: More clarity is needed at the outset of a programme as to what the money can and cannot be spent on.

- **Issue:** When informing organisations that they had been successful in receiving funding, NIACE initially paid 80 per cent of the grant. On completion of the project, organisations were to submit to NIACE a final report and an invoice for the remaining 20 per cent of the funding. Organisations were not prescribed any format for the final report to allow for flexibility.

  Lesson: Many organisations found the absence of guidelines for the final report unhelpful. We received a considerable number of telephone enquiries about the report and the quality and content of reports varied considerably. Some LEAs provided extremely sparse reports. The payment of grants in two parts was effective in keeping organisations in touch with NIACE.

Informing NIACE work

NIACE has greatly valued the opportunity to manage a fund that has allowed voluntary, community and statutory organisations to be creative and innovative in their provision of adult education.

NIACE has used this opportunity to inform many other areas of their work by:

- **Using Development Officers to monitor projects in their field of expertise**

  This has enabled Development Officers not only to build up their knowledge of what is happening in the field, but also to share their expertise with project staff and managers. Development Officers are now continuing to liaise with some of the organisations and integrate them into their networks to support the continuation of their work.

- **Disseminating relevant project reports to regional co-ordinators**

  This has helped enable NIACE regional co-ordinators map provision and establish contacts in their regions. It has been especially useful in informing the DfEE funded work to target two regions, the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside for more intensive mapping of existing and new partners and networks with and through whom to work.

- **Supporting Projects through other work**

  This has enabled continued support of projects funded through Project 99 by putting them in touch with other work that NIACE is involved with; for example, supporting older adults and family learning.

Appendices

Appendix A – Areas of Activity for Local Education Authorities

Men. Outreach and pilot programmes targeting men from groups under represented in post-compulsory learning;

Family Learning. Initiatives to extend inter-generational learning beyond basic skills; in particular proposals for half-term family learning activities will be welcome, and those forging links between community-based activity and schools;

Black Communities. Measures targeting the involvement of black and other minority ethnic and linguistic communities in the design and management of their own learning. In-service; training to improve the responsiveness of institutions and their staff to work with black communities;

Initiatives to involve **older people** in designing and promoting programmes designed to involve an increased number of older people, and in particular those with little or no post-school learning experience; in-service training opportunities; measures to celebrate the International Year of the Older Person through learning; measures targeting fourth age adults;

Disadvantaged Estates. Intensive outreach and taster activity on housing estates with low levels of participation; strengthening learning resources and modernising facilities, including furniture in centres serving such estates; initiatives to make effective links with health services would be particularly welcome;

Country Learning. Initiatives to strengthen outreach in rural areas, which might include half-time inter-generational learning weeks; travelling facilities to support village-based study circles; needs analysis relating to the Lifelong Learning Development Plans;

Adults with Learning Difficulties and/or other disabilities. Measures to extend the curriculum offered to adults with learning difficulties, and in particular for those with profound and multiple difficulties. Training opportunities for teaching and support staff to improve opportunities for inclusive learning; activities to develop self-advocacy for adults with learning difficulties; provision for adults with or recovering from mental health difficulties;

Disaffected Young Adults. In particular, measures building on the work of the NYA/NIACE project by undertaking local consultation and development initiatives;

Homelessness. Initiatives to offer taster programmes for homeless people, and to undertake outreach and support activities;

Revenue schemes for improving appearance of facilities so as to attract more learners.

Appendix B – Areas of Activity for Voluntary and Community Organisations

Country Learning. Initiatives to strengthen outreach in rural areas, which might include half-time inter-generational learning weeks; travelling facilities to support village-based study circles; needs analysis relating to the Lifelong Learning Development Plans.

Disadvantaged estates. Intensive outreach and taster activities on housing estates with low levels of participation; strengthening learning resources and modernising facilities, including furniture in centres serving such estates; initiatives to make effective links with health services to ensure good liaison with healthy living centres.

Adults with Learning Difficulties and/or other disabilities. Measures to extend the curriculum offer to adults with learning difficulties, and in particular for those with profound and multiple difficulties. In-service training opportunities for teaching and support staff to improve opportunities for inclusive learning; strategies to develop self-advocacy for adults with learning difficulties; measures to make effective provision for adults with or recovering from mental health difficulties.

Older and Bolder. Initiatives to involve older people in designing and promoting programmes designed to involve an increased number of older people, and in particular those with little or no post-school learning experience; in-service training opportunities; measures to celebrate the International Year of the Older Person through learning; measures targeting fourth age adults.

Disaffected Young Adults. In particular, measures building on the work of the NYA/NIACE project by undertaking local consultation and development initiatives.

Excluded Men. Outreach and pilot programmes targeting men from groups under-represented in post-compulsory learning.

Black Communities. Measures targeting the involvement of black and other minority ethnic and linguistic communities in the design and management of their own learning. In-service training to improve the responsiveness of institutions and their staff to work with black communities.

Family Learning. Initiatives to extend inter-generational learning beyond basic skills; in particular proposals for half-term family learning activities will be welcome, and those forging links between community based activity and schools.

Sustainable Development. Proposals which develop the capacity of services to address learning for sustainable development, through local needs analysis; and voluntary-statutory partnerships.

Short & Sweet

Community Action for Widening Participation

Fiona Aldridge

Short & Sweet is a final report of the Adult & Community Development Project (Project 99), a £2m DfEE-funded programme to distribute one-off development grants to local education authorities and voluntary and community organisations to put in place short-term activity in the adult and community education field.

The report contains many illustrations of projects funded, providing creative and imaginative ideas for others working to widen participation in their communities.

Left Picture: Greater London Somali Community

Centre Picture: Sacro Ipswich

Right Picture: Eastbourne YWCA and Community Centre - Sign Language Workshop

Price £5.00 (UK, inc p&p)

ISBN 1 86201 079 X

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